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Review of *Here You Have My Story: Eyewitness
Accounts of the Nineteenth-Century Central Plains*
edited by Richard E. Jensen

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Here You Have My Story: Eyewitness Accounts of the Nineteenth-Century Central Plains. Edited by Richard E. Jensen. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. xi + 386 pp. Tables, notes, index. \$30.00 paper.

The history of the central Great Plains is at its heart a vast collection of stories about the complex interactions between humans and the grasslands. When American settlers during the nineteenth century ventured into what had hitherto been Indian country, they found that their fortunes were inextricably bound to the whims of the often harsh Plains environment. In *Here You Have My Story: Eyewitness Accounts of the Nineteenth-Century Central Plains*, readers have the opportunity to view the challenges and triumphs of settling the Plains of present-day Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, and Wyoming through the eyes of those who were there.

This book is a compilation of twenty-three accounts originally published between 1885 and 1919 by the Nebraska State Historical Society. Editor Richard E. Jensen presents these recollections in four chapters: "Indian Country," "Military Campaigns and Army Life," "Overland Freighting on the Plains," and "White Settlement." Although each narrative offers a unique perspective on one of those themes, they collectively paint a vivid picture of the Central Plains, describing in great detail the landscape, vegetation, animals, Indians, and other settlers. Among the most fascinating things that readers learn about are Native intertribal warfare, the centrality of bison to Plains life, hardships imposed by the weather, and the cultural divide between American and Indian cultures. The reader should be warned, though, that the book offers little in the way of Native American viewpoints; the stories are

those of white American settlers and but one "civilized" Indian.

While the stories in themselves offer historical insight, Jensen's editorial work amplifies their contributions. Brief biographical sketches of the authors presented before each account help readers better understand their perspectives, while extensive endnotes elucidate events and individuals mentioned in the text. A bibliography lists additional contemporary accounts and recent scholarship, both in archival and published formats. Jensen's concise introduction to the book effectively highlights the nature of the documents, as well as their shortcomings and flaws, but an examination of their collective historical significance might have been worthwhile.

Overall, *Here You Have My Story* is an excellent collection. Jensen's selection of historical documents brilliantly captures the world of the nineteenth-century Central Plains as American settlers saw it. Although the text lacks analysis, perceptive readers will pick out overarching themes and trends that overshadow the offerings of the individual fragmented and sometimes anecdotal accounts.

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